

**“Changing by enchantment:”
Temporal Convergence, Early National
Comparisons, and Washington Irving’s
*Sketchbook***

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“I was written in my own native tongue, at a time when the language had become fixed, and indeed I was considered a model of pure and elegant English.”

—“The Mutability of Literature: A Colloquy in Westminster Abbey,” *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*

Near the midpoint of *The Sketchbook*, Geoffrey Crayon makes an astonishing discovery deep within the catacombs of Westminster Abbey—a six-hundred-year-old talking book. Yet curiously, Crayon is less astonished by the book’s miraculous speech than its impertinent assumptions about English literature. Galled by the book’s ascription of literary value to works “of pure and elegant English” (like itself), Crayon disputes all such claims about linguistic “purity and stability,” dismissing those who “talk of Spenser’s ‘well of pure English undefiled,’ as if the language . . . sprang from a well or fountainhead, and was not rather . . . perpetually subject to changes and intermixtures.”¹ An American writer among the ranks accused of defiling the well, Crayon is obviously served by this principle of mutability. If Edmund Spenser’s English is as much a permutation of the language as, say, Noah Webster’s, then his place as the standard bearer is not really founded on the bedrock of authenticity but on the sands of convention and aesthetic taste. The problem for American letters, as Washington Irving well knew, was

that the fiction of English cultural authenticity was more powerful than the fiction that brought books to life, resurrected headless horsemen, and induced twenty-year sleeps.

"The Mutability of Literature," though virtually unread today, offers a brilliant rehearsal of the nineteenth-century language debates, revealing in this ceaseless discussion an ideal of European cultural origins that Americans both desired and disavowed. For even as Crayon rails against the idea of an unspoiled English literary tradition, he fancies having come across an extraordinary literary preserve—a place where time has stopped and the living word survives unchanged across centuries. The recovery of European cultural antiquity is an understudied pattern in *The Sketchbook*. From London alleyways to the Yorkshire countryside, Crayon roams the forgotten corners of modernity, where the remains of old England are safeguarded.² In these hidden refuges—the backrooms of museums and libraries, old inns and antique shops, tombs and decayed buildings—chronological time halts and the past flashes back to life. Crayon refers to this phenomenon as "enchantment," an experience involving the sudden convergence of past, present, and future that radically alters his sense of historical time.³

Although best known for his Hudson Valley tales—"Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"—Irving, in his lifetime, also earned international acclaim for his exploration of European national cultures and world history.⁴ Early in his career, he experimented with a comparative approach to U.S. literature and history in *The Sketchbook*, a collection of travel vignettes, essays, and fiction that shuttles back and forth through time to investigate linkages between present-day Europe and the United States and their shared colonial history. Bewildered by the startling velocity of national transformation, Irving scribbles in an 1820 note that the United States seemed to be "changing by enchantment."⁵ Like others who possessed sentimental cultural allegiances to Europe, Irving worried that the accelerated rate of change might cause the nation to forget its colonial past.

This essay argues that *The Sketchbook's* moments of enchantment not only map out liminal regions between reality and fantasy but also advance new ways of thinking about time and historical processes. As a literary device, enchantment forges relationships across distant times and spaces among ostensibly unrelated peoples and phenomena—demonstrated, for instance, by the confluence of English, Yankee, Indian, and Dutch colonial cultures in "Rip Van Winkle." By instantly conjoining several non-contemporaneous times in a simultaneous present, enchantment produces a temporal arrangement that problematizes historical thinking founded on linear progressive time. Progressive chronologies, as I show, contributed to a system of faulty diachronic comparisons that reinforced ideas about European cultural supremacy. Enchantment engenders an order of time that revises intercultural comparisons between Europe and the United States—and,

in turn, the relationship between North American colonial and national histories. Instead of replacing colonial history in the manner of progressive national histories, narratives of enchantment author a synchronistic history in which multiple colonial pasts coexist within, and inextricably structure, an emerging national present.

It will be unsurprising to anyone familiar with nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture that progressive histories were on the upswing in the early decades and predominated by mid-century. Literary critics and historians have installed George Bancroft's providential ten-volume *History of the United States* (1834–1874) as the representative history of the period, and numerous other works of history and historical fiction promote this Post-Enlightenment liberal belief in human progress: Mercy Otis Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805), Abiel Holmes' *Annals of America* (1820), and James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823–1841), to name a few.⁶ A more complete survey of history writing from the period, however, attests to the presence of multiple theories of time and history, often combined in the same work: liberal progressivism, republican cyclicalism, millennialist, associationist, and romantic historicist.⁷ That scholarship has minimized this complex picture of early U.S. historical thought is partly a result of the long-held assumption that linear homogenous time conditioned the formation of national identity—an assumption recently overturned by an important body of work in American time studies. Critics such as Dana Luciano, Lloyd Pratt, and Thomas Allen have shown that the early nation was host to heterogeneous temporal formulations and argue for the centrality of temporal diversity to the experience of persons living in the nineteenth-century U.S. Different temporal modes, as Allen puts it, “provided opportunities for diverse agents with different interests to produce competing accounts of American national identity.”⁸ Adding to these interventions, this essay examines how enchantment, a fantastical temporal structure that draws together multiple chronologies, supplies both a comparative structure and a historical nexus for the array of colonial practices, ideologies, and emotional attachments that persisted in the early republic.⁹ In powerful contrast to revolutionary and republican-era histories that heralded the United States' unswerving course from colony to nation, *The Sketchbook* makes colonialism central to the story of national identity.

Even though present studies of the nation reject the idea of outright rupture with the colonial past, the imprint of this historical thesis nevertheless remains in core assumptions about American history. As historian Jack P. Greene argues, national historiography continues to imagine colonial history as antecedent to national history; this is evident, for example, in various iterations of the colonies-to-nation paradigm underwriting contemporary histories of the United States.¹⁰ Like its nineteenth-century

counterpart, this nation-centric paradigm posits separation from colonial origins, characterized not by rupture, *per se*, but by more widely accepted schematics of change, transition, development, or progression. Scholars working in early American studies have urged us to stretch our thinking across the conceptual divisions between the colonial and national eras, calling for a form of historical criticism capable of rearticulating the relationship between colonial and national history.¹¹ As a general rule these scholars believe that reconceptualizing national emergence within the larger frame of European imperialism provides an important corrective for uncovering continuities habitually overlooked by nationalist paradigms.¹² Even further, I recommend when postulating a relationship between colonial and national histories, we should not assume the national story “represent[s] an extension of the colonial story”¹³ but rather consider these stories as simultaneous. As *The Sketchbook* is primed to show us—national history is at the same time colonial history.

II. Writing for the Barbarians: Literature, Culture, and Colonialist Comparisons in the Early Republic

It has been a matter of marvel . . . that a man from the wilds of America should express himself in tolerable English. I was looked upon as something new and strange in literature; a kind of demi-savage, with a feather in his hand instead of on his head; and there was a curiosity to hear what such a being had to say about civilized society.

—Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall*.¹⁴

Recalling in his preface to *Bracebridge Hall* the smashing success of *The Sketchbook* two years earlier, Washington Irving attributes Britons’ enthusiastic reception of the book to its surpassing their low expectations for American writers, and thus with sharp humor pinpoints the predicament of writers in this former colony who labored under comparisons with their British predecessors. Although Americans had produced dozens of works of drama, poetry, and prose fiction since independence, these endeavors were dismissed by critics on both sides of the Atlantic who did not take U.S. writers seriously until Irving demonstrated his mastery of British prose style or, in Irving’s parlance, “express[ed] himself in tolerable English.”¹⁵ Both British and American reviewers regarded *The Sketchbook* as the first significant accomplishment of an American writer precisely because it measured up to British English, and to the least generous of these critics, the book had proved only that Americans were adept copyists.¹⁶ As Irving suggests in his essay “English Writers on America,” Britons’ increasingly condescending perspective on U.S. literary endeavor emerged within a regime of comparison that caused commentators to unjustly fault the

United States for imitating Britain. An unapologetic Anglophile, Irving tries to persuade his American audience that imitation is both worthwhile and necessary. It is the progressive chronology implicit in what Irving describes as the United States' "necessarily . . . imitative" relationship with Britain, I argue, that establishes a normative frame of reference for colonialist comparisons in this infamous century-long debate over U.S. national literature and culture. Americans were widely conceived as the heirs of British cultural tradition, and as long as American culture was thought to follow a British predecessor it would remain a subordinate rather than a peer.¹⁷

Reinterpreted through the lens of European imperialism, notions about the relative value of U.S. and British cultural production demonstrate a vision of the world deeply informed by comparative thinking—indeed, by residual colonialist comparisons that magisterially installed British literature as the standard by which all Anglophone literatures should be judged. Disparaging commentary about early U.S. culture therefore should not be dismissed as the snobbish pastime of a few British critics, but understood as part of an imperial enterprise to declare global cultural authority, especially where political authority was no more. Although no longer colonists in a political sense, Americans' persistent anxiety over the nation's colonial origins—what Charles Brockden Brown referred to as "the obstacles and embarrassments arising from [the United States'] colonial condition"¹⁸—suggests the extent of their ideological coercion. Internalizing British cultural colonialist ideas, attitudes, and practices, Americans readily believed U.S. literature to be worth far less than its British counterpart, and few ventured to question the universal value of a canon that could boast Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope. As both badge and banner of British civilization, this impressive canon threw into sharp relief the meager American analogue, and as many observers saw it, the "young nation's" comparative lack of cultivation. At the height of anti-American sentiment preceding and following the War of 1812, British commentators proclaimed Americans' cultural backwardness in a prolific ethnography of American culture and manners. Drawing on the standard vocabulary of imperial culture to describe U.S. citizens as "vulgar," "primitive," "barbaric," "uncivilized," and "savage,"¹⁹ British observers created and reinforced Anglocentric perceptions of a formerly colonized population that ought to be subjugated.²⁰

Even if such name-calling has been framed far more commonly as playground bullying rather than imperializing gesture, it is important to recognize that this discourse of U.S. primitivism was extremely significant to Great Britain's assertion of cultural hegemony abroad. Such epithets functioned as temporal markers within a widely influential stadialist model of historical progress. A product of European Enlightenment, stadialism identified stages of society on a continuum from savagery to civilization, each stage fol-

lowing the next in orderly progression irrespective of factors like race, place, or time.²¹ Within this schematic, American creoles were envisioned at an inferior stage of human development, as evidenced in Americans' alleged lack of culture and history—a lack marked by the “new” in the spatiotemporal conjunction “New World.” Such distancing along this world historical timeline engendered comparisons that corroborated British claims to cultural supremacy. Conceived as posterior to Europe, the United States inhabited a chronological position that forced its cultural production to be measured through an ability to “catch up to” more advanced Old World European cultures.

Within a stadialist perspective, Irving's epigraphic self-description as a “demi-savage” indicates American creoles' intermediate position between the two poles of savagery and civilization. I would also suggest, however, that his compression of dual time frames in a single subject suggests something far more complicated and interesting. Similar to Rip Van Winkle, the demi-savage is a figure of temporal coincidence who not only invites comparisons between different segments of time but also deconstructs the foundations on which such segmentations or partitions occur. I will return to this observation in the closing section of the essay.

Irving's preoccupation with the relationship between different time frames was part of a larger historiographical transformation in European intellectual culture between roughly 1770 and 1830, a period that witnessed a fundamental change in the conceptualization and representation of historical time. In his luminous account of Romantic historicism, England in 1819, James Chandler argues:

What makes Romantic historicism distinctive . . . is the quality and extent of its interest in what might be called “comparative contemporaneities.” As [John Stuart] Mill put it, “The idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come, had occurred to philosophers; but it never before was itself the dominant idea of any age.”²²

Chandler proceeds to describe the notion of “comparative contemporaneities” as a kind of “transnational simultaneity that makes national-cultural specificity imaginable.”²³ For British writers such as Percy Shelley and Anna Barbauld, argues Chandler, this notion enabled a greater mutual understanding of the world's nations with each other. While the Romantic historicist theory of comparative contemporaneities importantly influences Irving's early experimentation with history writing, especially in *The Sketchbook*, his variegated book revises (and occasionally reverses) the hierarchical logic grounding this comparative history. Despite the collateral spirit of intercultural comparison, this comparative approach contained a significant drawback: the comparatist needed “to

keep one kingdom as a meter for the rest," as Barbauld explains in her essay "The Uses of History."²⁴ In this schematic, the "meter" was invariably Britain or Europe.

Similar to these Romantic literary historicists, Irving was attracted to the transnational aims of this nascent comparative approach, believing that literary diplomacy could ameliorate Anglo-American relations rent by the Revolution, and more recently, by the War of 1812 and the war of words in the press. Instead of rejecting foreign cultural influences as U.S. nationalists proposed, Irving and other writers, mostly in the post-Revolutionary generation, writers such as Charles Brockden Brown, Susanna Rowson, and William Cullen Bryant, advocated cultural exchange between the U.S. and Britain with the hope of expanding the narrow partisan perspectives dividing the two nation's citizens at their geopolitical and cultural borders. Irving, whom Bryant credited in a eulogy with bringing "the people of the two countries to a better understanding with each other,"²⁵ saw literature as a vital medium for creating global relations, and served as a kind of literary ambassador to England and Europe during his two decades abroad. This notion of literature's role in fostering global belonging can be situated within the broader development of world literature in the 1810s and 1820s, which shared with Romantic historicism an intellectual background critical of nationalism.²⁶

This early interest in comparativism has been overshadowed by American literary history's faithful account of nationalist-minded writers and critics who made independence from European literary tradition a requirement for national literature. In linking these earlier U.S. writers to a different intellectual tradition, however, I am less interested in promoting one group's cosmopolitanism over the other's nationalism than demonstrating similar challenges in asserting U.S. literature within the comparative framework constructed under colonialism. Notwithstanding their obvious differences, both schools were responding to a post-colonial cultural predicament; both were committed to amending the nation's colonial status, one by disaffiliating with Britain and the other by establishing the U.S. as a peer. While nationalist literature tended to emphasize distinction, and world literature commonality, both utilized the same comparative method to position European literary tradition as the reference point for comparison.

Writing on the subject of comparative literature, Rey Chow argues via Foucault's *The Order of Things* that this comparative method is flawed because the logic determining commonality goes unchallenged, even though the rationale for grouping objects by their "natural" relationships is precisely what needs to be reevaluated.²⁷ In other words, comparing objects whose properties of comparison have been predetermined by a definitive standard—European literature and culture—is simply a form of supplementation that affirms the primary term of comparison. In this hierarchical formulation, the outcome of

comparison for the secondary term—U.S. literature and culture—is always subordinated to the first. Even if the majority of Americans and Britons continued to deploy this colonialist comparative method, U.S. political independence had begun to problematize this method precisely because it denaturalized the “common ground” that stabilized comparisons between British and American culture.²⁸ How to proceed with comparison after the common ground (quite literally) of British nationhood is gone? Foucault, in Chow’s view, provides a partial answer. In the absence of this common ground, comparison would advance less by searching for hidden similarity, equivalence, and likeness than by “judging the value of different things horizontally, in sheer approximation to one another.”²⁹ Following Foucault, Chow recommends that rather than seeking out pre-determined commonalities, we need a practice of comparison “rooted in the co-presence of dissimilar kinds of phenomena,”³⁰ a means of accounting for both similarities and differences without recourse to a preestablished grid of knowledge.

The Sketchbook suggests one such structure of comparison, though a prodigious task. Devising a system of non-hierarchical cultural comparisons involved no less than authoring a non-hierarchical history. For if progressive historical narratives such as stadialism continued to inform cross-cultural comparisons, then the comparatist could only expect to reproduce conclusions within the conceptual horizon of this historical theory. Moreover, while no longer political subjects of Great Britain, many Americans were still powerfully attached to the pan-Atlantic identity forged by the British Empire in the eighteenth century.³¹ But how? On what grounds could Americans claim a relationship with Britain while also extracting themselves from the problematic comparative framework that always situated them as inferiors? In other words, how could the United States be both related and distinct, both similar and different, from Britain? These were questions weighing on Irving’s mind as he sailed to England in 1815.

III. *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon:* Collateral Comparisons and the Temporality of Enchantment

The contents of his book seemed to be as heterogeneous as those of the witches’ caldron in *Macbeth*.

—“The Art of Bookmaking,” *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*³²

The portrait of Geoffrey Crayon, romantic idler, roaming around England indulging its rich cultural history is a time-honored one. True, his wanderings through the backrooms and hidden passages of the British Museum, Windsor Castle, and Westminster Abbey, through out-of-the-way spots like Little Britain, Stratford on Avon, and the Boar’s Head

Tavern, are suffused by a daydreaming mood; at times he appears overtaken by the feeling of British cultural antiquity. Yet as much as Irving's literary persona plays the part of a romantic tourist, he is less a passive consumer of Britain than a cultural researcher busy putting his impressions of British literature and customs into order. Collecting and combining materials, recording his observations, and sorting out cultural similarities and differences, Crayon—a diligent comparatist—investigates the cultural exchanges and historical crossings of Europeans and Americans. Through enchantment's alternative structure of time and history, Irving produces a comparative practice derived from the proximity and co-presence of disparate materials, peoples, and phenomena.³³

Although most critical inquiries have failed to account for the relationship between the British and American sketches—and what is more, for the fact that nearly the entire compilation, including “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” emerged from the period of his expatriation in England—it is evident that Irving's project seeks to understand how the colonial past continues to animate the national present.³⁴ Indeed, the greater part of critical writing on Washington Irving's *Sketchbook* still focuses on a few excerpts with American settings, as though the clutter of assorted sketches about British culture detracts from the autonomous national merit of “Rip” or “Sleepy Hollow.” Omitted in most analyses of *The Sketchbook* are virtually unknown pieces such as “English Writers on America,” “A Sunday in London,” “Westminster Abbey,” “Stratford on Avon,” “John Bull,” “A Royal Poet,” and “Little Britain.”³⁵ By examining the American sketches in isolation, critics have circumvented the chaotic heterogeneity of the Atlantic world conflated in the collection.

When read as a composite, it becomes clear that *The Sketchbook* partakes in the comparative cultural preoccupations of European Romanticism but at the same time destabilizes the temporal hierarchies erected by colonialist comparative practices. Gesturing to the debate about U.S. cultural imitation in “The Art of Bookmaking,” Irving levels a playful yet pointed critique of the imperialist logic informing judgments of U.S. literature's derivative or otherwise inferior qualities. In this sketch Crayon discovers a secret chamber in the British Museum where modern authors busy themselves filching the work of dead writers. Crayon describes the sampling of one author in particular whose “heterogeneous” compositions bear a conspicuous resemblance to his sketchbook, and through this doppelgänger alludes to accusations of Irving's own practice of “getting up” books from existing materials.³⁶ Noting that Irving's detractors frequently accused him of stealing from other sources, Michael Gilmore describes the sketch as a self-reflexive exploration of “Anglo-American attitudes about the rights of cultural ownership.”³⁷ Irving's preoccupation with literary sources in “The Art of Bookmaking”

extends to *The Sketchbook's* broader concern with literature's status as national cultural property. Characterizing himself as a scavenger for stories on his European tour seems at once a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgement of his debt to British culture and a send up of how British writers also engage in the entirely unavoidable practice of literary borrowing.

More than once while exploring England's historic landmarks, Crayon experiences a fleeting moment in which the past suddenly meets up with the present. For Crayon, who depicts the American setting as lacking comparable cultural monuments, the sensation of enchantment is evoked both by the singularity of British cultural antiquity and by the powerful historical associations he holds with such sites.³⁸ In "Stratford on Avon," for instance, Crayon makes a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Shakespeare, where his contemplation of the spot imaginatively calls forth Elizabethan England: "My mind had become so completely possessed by the imaginary scenes and characters connected with it that I seemed to be actually living among them."³⁹ Crayon imagines himself a contemporary of the citizens of early modern Europe for a brief period, someone who "seemed to be actually living among them." His mental powers bridge the long distance of two centuries. Time is neither successive nor cumulative, with the past preceding the present and future in steady progression along a fixed axis. Instead, different points in time are synchronous and paratactic. Though temporary, enchantment's side-by-side configurations challenge temporal hierarchies of the sort constructed within progressive histories. First, last—before, after—precursor, successor—all suddenly lose meaning in the event of simultaneous occurrence.

For Irving, the temporality of enchantment offered important possibilities for historical thinking, above all an innovative method of comparison. This principle is aptly demonstrated in "London Antiques," a sketch where Crayon winds his way through a labyrinth of concrete and mortar to a curiosity chamber where "relics of a 'foregone world' [were] locked up in the heart of the city." After surveying several such objects, including "implements of savage warfare, strange idols and stuffed alligators," he describes the room as "a fitting laboratory for a necromancer."⁴⁰ Crayon associates the outrageous assortment with the logic of magic. Items that do not belong to the same time frame commingle in the collector's berth, confounding the sense of historical sequence. The necromancer's laboratory not only draws our attention to the strange mixtures made possible by enchantment but also supplies the central metaphor for the miscellaneous *Sketchbook*. Assembling a hodgepodge of materials from various sources, Irving manufactures a text his biographer Stanley Williams characterizes as "too varied" and "lacking form," not unlike Crayon's assessment of the "heterogeneous" concoction in the witches' caldron

in *Macbeth*.⁴¹ In *The Sketchbook*, the comparative possibilities invited by these surprising juxtapositions are exemplified thematically by sketches such as "London Antiques," "Little Britain," and "Rip Van Winkle" as well as formally by the properties of a sketchbook that gathers miscellaneous content within its pages. These juxtapositions instance Irving's comparative historical method, which, recalling Foucault, evaluates dissimilar things through sheer spatiotemporal proximity.⁴²

Since these collateral comparisons across space and time could not be readily engineered within the generic conventions of nineteenth-century history writing, Irving draws on the popular periodical form of the miscellany. Through his literary medley, Irving reconfigures colonialist comparisons at the heterochronic intersection of different disciplinary perspectives in what we might characterize as a proto-cultural studies practice. Bringing together folklore, short fiction, ethnography, literary criticism, sociology, antiquarianism, and cultural history, *The Sketchbook's* interdisciplinarity suggests Irving's experimentation with a form of knowledge production capable of reinterpreting U.S.-British relationships as conceived by both British imperialist and U.S. anticolonial nationalist historical epistemologies. Against the vision of British cultural supremacy or American cultural rupture promoted by nation-centered political and literary histories, Irving posits a relational structure that neither subordinates nor separates Americans. Through the kaleidoscope of critical perspectives brought to bear on this subject—at one turn through antiquarian inquiry; at another, through anthropological study of British customs; at another, through sociological investigations of familial relations—*The Sketchbook* assembles a complex schematic of affiliation that erodes the epistemic foundations of British imperialist and U.S. nationalist cultural hierarchies. As subjects within the disciplinary parameters of nationalist history, Americans were either descendants or independents of Britain, but from an interdisciplinary perspective these uniform relationships and coherent subjectivities begin to fracture. *The Sketchbook* imagines Americans as strangers, kindred, guests, companions, foreigners, fellows, and friends to the British.⁴³

In combining disciplines, genres, and materials in *The Sketchbook*, Irving forms something like a Benjaminian constellation, an arrangement compelling new interpretations of the pieces' relationships with each other. Drawing on the pictorial nature of the sketch form, Irving attempts to create a form of critical historical vision—literally, a new way of seeing and apprehending the past—a visual idiom for historical knowledge that should not surprise us given Irving's well-documented fondness for the visual arts. It would be hard to deny that Irving himself perceived a correspondence between his writing and drawing considering the title of the miscellany, *The Sketchbook*, and his penname, Geoffrey Crayon.⁴⁴ As sketches, these brief, descriptive pieces are as fleeting pictures,

appearing suddenly and almost instantly dissolving. The sketchbook supplies a fitting literary form for history conceived as a collection of discrete moments, loosely connected at times and completely disconnected at others. In addition to the ephemeral nature of the form, the literary sketch's lack of plot, what at least one critic has termed its "stillness,"⁴⁵ enables Irving to suspend the chronological sequence of events necessitated by progressive histories. Withstanding temporal change, the sketch is a static form distinguished from narrative forms such as the short story, the novel, or history, all of which center on change or progression.⁴⁶ Thus freed from the imposition of moving forward in time, the sketch form allows Irving to construct the relationship between past, present, and future as something other than a causally driven series of directed movements.

Of course, it seems counterintuitive to locate innovation in stasis, particularly in a work filtered through the consciousness of a narrator steadfastly resistant to change. This formal impulse to freeze time underscores the nostalgic orientation of Crayon's past-seeking journey through England and his quest for sites where the passage of time has been immobilized. Throughout the sketches Crayon's nostalgia involves a sense of loss and longing for something in the past that no longer exists (and probably never did). The precise object of his nostalgia is difficult to pin down. Crayon is vaguely seeking a departed European homeland, a time, as much as a place, of cultural origins and communal belonging; but beneath this longing for indigenous space-time and Anglo-American reunion is the more symptomatic modern desire for past stability and order. As we might expect, this desire underlies his attraction to asylums from progress that allow him to "[step] back into the regions of antiquity, and [lose himself] among the shades of former ages."⁴⁷ In these sites of enchantment, chronological time temporarily halts as Crayon becomes lost in wonder at the past—but it is precisely this arrest that permits him to witness the otherwise imperceptible transition between past and future orders.

Pieces like "Little Britain," "Sleepy Hollow," and "Rip Van Winkle" make social and political transition explicit foci of narratives that ponder the meaning of historical change. In "Little Britain," Irving's genial narrator, following what by now is a familiar pattern, has holed up in a pocket of the city he describes as "a fragment of London as it was in its better days, with its antiquated folks and fashions." Crayon presents Little Britain as a sanctuary for Old England because its customs have been maintained for centuries in this same spot, once the residence of the Dukes of Brittany and, ever since, home to the English folk and "the strong-hold of true John Bullism."⁴⁸ Toward the end of the sketch Crayon begins to focus on the displacement of traditional English lifeways by commercial values and cultural imperialism. Little Britain is beginning to yield to the "foreign invasion" of French customs and manners, introduced by an upstart family as

exotic imports for cultural capital. Most striking about this portrayal is the suspended interlude when one establishment gives way to another. Old English games and country dances, for example, share an interval with new pastimes such as quadrilles and piano playing. By lingering on this process, the sketch presents to the eye a temporal arrangement that often remains invisible because it is fleeting—the convergence of past and future orders in the fugitive present.

Given its capability of representing change through stasis (and stasis through change), enchantment provided a framework well suited for *The Sketchbook's* exploration of the transformations taking place in the post-revolutionary Atlantic world. In his conclusion to the sketch Crayon laments Little Britain's recent changes, sure signs, in his estimation, of the little "empire's" decline just "like the great empire whose name it bears." In an arch nod to Gibbonian history, he declares, "All empires . . . says some philosopher or historian, are doomed to changes and revolutions."⁴⁹ This cyclical history of empire suggests a partial explanation for *The Sketchbook's* coordination of stasis and change—in "Little Britain," as in "Rip Van Winkle," revolution involves the turning of the world at 360 degrees. In *The Sketchbook* enchantment expresses uncertainties about national development, operating as a conceit in which change is less about progress than recurrence. As we shall see, these recurrences—these strange returns to the future—are generated by a fanciful historiography of enchantment for a double-edged effect. Such accounts permit powerful glimpses of historical alterity, disclosing the potentiality of history before one set of outcomes settles into place. At the same time, they invent new hierarchies.

IV. "Rip Van Winkle" and The Historiography of Enchantment

His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before.

—"Rip Van Winkle"

The Sketchbook's re-imaginings of time and change introduce new ways of reading the celebrated story of the man who slept through the American Revolution. A long critical tradition has distinguished "Rip Van Winkle" as a tale of national genesis or a bildungsroman of the nation's self-development,⁵⁰ though a few notable studies have complicated this view of straight and autonomous progression from colony to nation.⁵¹ Joining these revisionist interpretations, I argue that the story concerns itself with colonial legacies in the national present, a subject Irving first explored in *Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809). "Rip Van Winkle" advances a non-linear and relational model of history in its

constellation of multiple cultures that dominated the Hudson Valley at discrepant points in time. Irving's "historiography of enchantment," as I call it, conducts comparative history through the principle of synchronicity, a structure of acausal connection that derives relational meaning through contingency or coincidence as opposed to cause-and-effect.⁵² "Rip Van Winkle" posits meaningful coincidence as an explanation for the transhistorical phenomena of revolution and empire—phenomena, in the story's view, that seem to defy causal logic. By compressing and layering time, enchantment operates as the device through which Irving can compare ostensibly divergent historical moments in a single space—a configuration that provides an important alternative to the progressive chronological time of nationalist history.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the incidents preceding Rip Van Winkle's legendary sleep, an extraordinary episode that has captured the popular imagination since it was first published in 1819. Hinting at the heterogeneous history of the region, "Rip Van Winkle" reveals traces of the Indian, German, and Swedish strongholds in the Valley alongside the British and Dutch imperial histories more central to the story.⁵³ Above and beyond the U.S.-British conflict commonly seen as its crux, the story invokes the gamut of colonial contest in the region, reminding us that the area along the Hudson River was Delaware and Wappinger territory, Swedish Fort Christina, New Netherland, and New York before it became the United States. Alluding to a complex, multi-layered regional identity that had undergone perpetual revision, the story suggests not that the British colonies had "inner propulsion" toward the U.S. nation-state, but rather that the past possessed numerous potentialities.⁵⁴

Early in the story, a portal to early seventeenth-century New Amsterdam opens up in the Catskill Mountains of late eighteenth-century New York, unleashing supernatural agents who divert Rip from his hunting trip, make him their servant, and eventually put him to sleep with their somnolent ale. This episode is noteworthy because the ghostly creatures are Henry Hudson and the crew of the *Half Moon*, revenants of the Dutch colonial past whose appearance in the story makes European imperial history far more consequential than critical tradition has led us to believe. In 1609, Hudson sailed the *Half Moon* up the river that bears his name, having been hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a passage to the Orient. Hudson's presence in the story recalls the commercial interests that eventually led to Dutch colonization under the patroon system,⁵⁵ as well as the intense Anglo-Dutch commercial rivalry in the seventeenth century—which sharply escalated when Hudson, a British subject with an established reputation as a navigator and explorer, signed on with the Dutch company. Decades later, Anglo-Dutch

conflict over the North American enterprise culminated in the English conquest of New Netherland in 1664.⁵⁶

An easily overlooked reference to Dutch genre painting powerfully conjures this vast imperial theater. When Rip encounters Hudson and his crew, they appear so oddly stationary that the “whole group remind[s] [him] of the figures in an old Flemish painting in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson,” a painting “brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.”⁵⁷ As Richard J. Zlogar observes, this reference invites us to consider the Hudson tableau in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, particularly the “Merry Company” paintings popularized by works such as Esaias van de Velde’s *Banquet Outdoors* and Willem Buytewech’s *Banquet in the Open Air*. Taking Zlogar’s argument a step further, I suggest that these images serve as mirrors on celebratory post-Revolutionary culture in the United States. Crucially, the lively celebrations in Merry Company paintings represent a time of release after decades of Dutch struggle for independence from Spain in the Eighty Years War (1565–1648). It was the brief peace between Spain and the northern Netherlands (1609–21) that made possible Hudson’s voyage, the chartering of the Dutch West India Company, and the settlement of New Netherland, activities motivated in part by the Dutch desire to surpass their former Iberian overlords.⁵⁸ Through this historical allusion, Irving directs our attention to correspondences between the Dutch Revolt and the American Revolution. The Dutch revolted against and eventually overthrew the Spanish Empire; in the latter phases of this struggle, the Dutch Republic arose as a major world power and set into motion its Atlantic empire.⁵⁹ This movement from colony, to republic, to empire offers a provocative parallel to developments in the United States, where citizens were debating the imperial future of the colony-turned-republic. The abrupt concatenation of political orders occurs in the central event of the narrative—Rip’s deep sleep, which compresses twenty years into an instant.

Through the device of enchantment, Irving brings ostensibly unrelated historical periods and historical events into significant relation, highlighting obscure but meaningful relationships that take shape outside the linear historical laws of causation. For instance, the Dutch Revolt and the American Revolution are events separated in time and space but linked by an insurrectionary consciousness and ensuing republicanism. As opposed to cause and effect, they come into relation through the archetype of revolution, as two among many uprisings against imperial powers in the modern Atlantic world. This approach challenges exceptionalist histories of the American Revolution and nationalist teleologies progressing toward the inevitable goal of “liberty.” With the imperative to establish causal change, these conspicuously Anglo-centric narratives hailed the Revolu-

tion as the point of departure from an oppressive colonial past, insisting that colonialism ended when the nation began.⁶⁰ The allusive parallels between the Dutch and American revolutions bear out the reality that the Atlantic revolutions did not cause empire's demise but rather its revitalization.⁶¹

Rip's acceleration through time closes the temporal and conceptual distance between colony and nation, revealing the early republic to be a crossroads of colonial and national identities, ideologies, and cultures. Fragments of the colonial past glitter in the national present when Rip awakes and re-enters the village, a community bustling with the business of national life yet bearing traces of Dutch and British colonial order. From Rip's perspective, a "strange and incomprehensible" flag hangs above a former Dutch inn whose sign displays the face of King George. These signifiers of national and colonial dominion merge together for the man who missed the war; but for the townspeople, particularly the younger members who date and interpret events with reference to the Revolution, these same signifiers evince not the confused entanglement of cultures, but a fully transformed U.S. municipality, one that conducts its elections with the élan of the newly converted, one whose models of identity are narrowly confined to "Federal or Democrat."⁶² As these contradictory emblems become perceptible to Rip, we learn that his new awareness is estranging: "Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before!"⁶³ It is clear that this scene represents the disorienting experience of a man who, in Jeffrey Insko's phrase, is "momentarily lost within [history]."⁶⁴ Even so, Rip's estrangement should not prevent us from observing that he sees the visions others are incapable of seeing.

Rip's visual perception is dramatically affected by enchantment's compression of time, which causes elements that typically diverge in progressive histories to converge in his field of sight. Since only a few hours have elapsed in Rip's experience, he views the "pre- and post-" Revolutionary worlds in closer proximity than those who have endured time's twenty-year unfolding. Importantly, his insights come in the form of still images: the Hudson tableau, the village montage, and, above all, the shabbily made-over portrait of King George hanging above the Union Hotel:

[Rip] recognized on the sign . . . the ruby face of King George . . . but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a scepter, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.⁶⁵

Shimmering from the sign are two political orders—monarchism and republicanism—both signified by the very same body. Although the two were widely assumed to be discrete, their overlapping postures on the sign suggest otherwise. If the King signals the American colonies, and the president, the American nation, then the superimposition of the two figures strongly suggests that colonialism and nationalism are difficult to separate. Despite its humor about the superficial nature of revolutionary change (one George succeeds another) the sign points to the serious implications of these converging bodies politic. Colonialism survived independence, not only in European Americans' persistent anxiety over the nation's colonial origins but also in the United States' colonization of Native Americans, reliance on a slave labor economy, and institutionalization of class and racial inequities.⁶⁶

"Rip Van Winkle's" synergistic images imply that empire has refashioned itself in the U.S., dressed up in the new garb of republicanism. Let me be clear—empire was no secret in the early republic.⁶⁷ The flash, therefore, is not that empire persists but that the American republican empire—envisioned by many, most notably Thomas Jefferson, as a bold departure from the British aristocratic empire—resembles its predecessor far more than supporters are willing to admit. This figure points to the reconstitution of aristocratic forms of governance in the administration of republican empire, from the quasi-monarchical veneration of the first president to the political domination of an elite ruling class along the eastern seaboard.

Laying sword over scepter, the sign calls attention to the United States' increasing use of physical force to preserve and to expand its empire, which sharply undermined what was perceived to be a key difference between a monarchical empire that commands by force and fear and a republican empire that derives just powers from the consent of the governed. By 1819, when Irving published "Rip Van Winkle," U.S. rule by coercion was especially evident in the forcible subjugation of racial minorities, including, during the story's setting, the confiscation of Iroquois lands northwest of the Hudson Valley as remuneration for U.S. soldiers in the Revolutionary War. As Irving composed *The Sketchbook* the U.S. military waged war against Southern tribes, seizing land that would be allotted to settlers and War of 1812 veterans, acts of aggression he denounces in two of the book's sketches.⁶⁸

In "Traits of Indian Character" and "Philip of Pokanoket," accounts of seventeenth-century conflict between British settlers and Massachusetts tribes, Crayon condemns the settlers' "mercenary and frequently wanton warfare" and "their intrusive policy and dictatorial conduct."⁶⁹ In chronicling seventeenth-century British colonialism, the sketches call attention to the colonial past's persistence in the policies of the U.S.

republican empire, both in terms of racial violence and the so-called peaceful and legal treaties that permitted confiscation of Indian lands. Yet at the same time Irving reviles settlers' cruel hostilities toward Native Americans, he contributes to a more subtle form of colonialist violence himself, concluding that the indigenous population "will vanish like a vapor from the face of the earth; their very history will be lost in forgetfulness."⁷⁰ Formally speaking, the Indian sketches represent Irving's attempt to authenticate *The Sketchbook* as a work of American literature, but similar to his adoption of the writerly "demi-savage" persona, it is an act of appropriation that results in partial omission of Native American subjects and histories. This pattern of half-erasure is apparent with vanishing Indians in the sketches, and also in the postscript to "Rip Van Winkle."

The Indian legend in the much-overlooked postscript, supposedly assembled from the notes of Diedrich Knickerbocker, features an Indian who loses his way in the Catskills while on a hunting trip and happens upon a Manitoo and magic gourds in an enchanted mountain pass. If this story sounds familiar, the Delaware story of Dutch arrival in New York should illuminate the extent of authorial omission of indigenous sources in "Rip Van Winkle." According to Delaware tradition, a warrior accepts a flagon of liquor offered by the Dutch crew, not wanting to offend the strangers but uncertain about the consequences of drinking the unfamiliar contents. The story proceeds, as recorded by John Heckewelder in 1819, with the warrior "fall[ing] into a sound sleep"—so sound that his companions "think he has expired."⁷¹ In various transcriptions, including Heckewelder's, the incident immediately following is the newcomers' humiliation of the natives and the deceitful appropriation of their land, a sequence that implies the Delawares' sobering realization that the Dutch presence would forever "change [their] way of life."⁷² Irving was well aware of the Delaware story, or at least the Dutch version of the incident, since in *The History of New York* he recounts a similar episode in which Hudson and his crew offer a group of Delawares a drink and one man falls asleep.⁷³ Even though Irving scholars generally agree that he adapted "Rip Van Winkle" from the German folktale "Peter Klaus," it is evident his story has roots not only in the European folktale tradition but also in the literatures of colonial encounter.

Up to this point I have concentrated on how enchantment conveys insight to historical constellations that have the power to interrupt progressive narratives of nationalism but we cannot ignore its complementary displacements. Even as Irving calls attention to the myth of U.S. historical rupture, he unwittingly assists national fantasy by bringing a sense of *fait accompli* to Native Americans' extinction. While enchantment produces revelations by yoking together disparate moments in time, reclaiming what is lost through eccentric recombinations, these anachronisms produce their own exclu-

sions. Progressive national histories create exclusions through a regime of substitution, wherein the English supersede the Dutch, an egalitarian president supersedes a despotic king, republic supersedes empire, and European Americans supersede Native Americans—in relentless succession. Enchanted historiography works through the mechanism of displacement rather than replacement, a distinction more significant than their slight prefixal differences suggest. Instead of replacing terms by relegating them to the past, enchantment renders them contemporaneous, producing a comparative structure that examines the cultures of North America relative to each other. The result is a sharpening of national identity as something called the United States is cohering, as if to imply that one cannot know the meaning of the U.S. in 1819 without a mutual understanding of the Delaware and the Dutch in 1609, the Dutch and the British in 1664, and the British and the Americans in 1776. Thus *The Sketchbook's* project of comparison, despite its inclinations and contributions toward parity and anti-nationalist thinking, runs the risk of creating its own hierarchies if the nations in comparison are seen as obsolete. While the comparative practice in the history-minded sketches shrewdly demonstrates the revolutionary cycle of empire, it also proves that the anachronism of bringing former ages closer can make the events and their participants feel even more distant.

This temporal conundrum is evident in instances of enchantment, those transitional interludes when past and future ages meet—colony, nation, and empire in “Rip Van Winkle”; old England and modern England in “Little Britain”; archaic British English and new American English in “The Mutability of Literature.” Each example configures the past unreal conditional of history. This historical tense invites readers to imagine pasts that could have happened differently had circumstances been different, or pasts that never happened at all. In “Rip Van Winkle,” for instance, readers from the nineteenth- or twenty-first century future look back to a not-yet-complete transition between sociopolitical orders, a brief span when multiple historical outcomes are still possible. This envisioning of “what could have been” achieves a couple of competing effects. As I have discussed at length, enchanted historiography contests the taken-for-granted foreclosures of progressive nationalist narratives. Rip’s enchantment reveals what these histories work hard to conceal: the United States, its Anglo hegemony, and republican empire were far from inevitable. Nevertheless, the sense of what could have been incorporates the knowledge that these alternatives to the U.S. imperialist nation did not pan out, at least not yet. The shadowy presence of a Dutch North American empire, a British empire, and self-determining Indigenous nations encourages readers to mourn possibilities that have been lost. Enchantment, then, is not an elixir for nationalism; it is a reminder that elegiac remembrances of the colonial past and critiques of U.S. empire

building were often managed simultaneously to serve a complex comparative formation of national identity.

Ultimately, enchantment is a hermeneutic that opens alternative historical realities while displacing others, accounting for the limits of its own historical representation as it seeks to improve upon the progressive historiography of nationalism. That “Rip Van Winkle” supplies a method for retrieving the Delaware story it has sidelined is not salutary, but the historian’s cognizance of his own enchantment surely is. In the end, Rip becomes the village historian who, in re-telling his story of enchantment, inscribes aporia in the historical record. The American Revolution remains a gaping void in his experience, and though this absence is precisely what allows him to perceive the imbrication of “pre-” and “post-” revolutionary America, it is also the elided context needed to fully comprehend what he saw. This void registers the indeterminacy of historical discourse, the fact that we will never know the full story of the past. Through the gaps in Rip’s memory, through the gaps of Knickerbocker’s fragmented notes and memoranda, Irving constructs a history that incorporates the awareness that historians, including himself, remain unaware of all factors that could grant them certainty. By raising this uncertainty to the level of consciousness, Irving’s project confronts what national history has disavowed in favor of invariable truths. The historiography of enchantment insists that no history can ever achieve closure, that historical truth undergoes revision as changes in the present alter our view of the past. In the post-colonial context of the early republic, Native American and European cultures are never fully removed, European colonial legacies haunt the nation, and the mechanics of “enchantment” refuse to let Americans forget.

Notes

1. Washington Irving, *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819–1820; reprint, New York: Signet, 1961), 131–32. Further references to *The Sketch Book* are to this edition and will be cited as *TSB*.
2. The collected sketches feature Crayon’s journey through London and the English countryside, with the exception of one, “The Inn Kitchen,” where he appears as a traveler in the Netherlands. Twenty-four of the thirty-three sketches in the collection are set in England, five in the United States, one in the Netherlands, one in Germany, and two of indeterminate location.
3. *TSB*, 270.
4. Historical writing dominates Irving’s corpus from beginning to end, *The History of New York* (1809) and *The Life of George Washington* (1855–59) serving as bookends to his career. See Michael Warner, “Irving’s Posterity.” *ELH*, 67.3 (Fall 2000): 773–99; Jerome McGann, “Washington Irving, *A History of New York*, and American History.” *Early American Literature*, 47.2 (2012): 349–376; William Hedges, *Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802–1832*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980).

5. Washington Irving, *The Complete Works of Washington Irving: Journals II (1807–1822)*, Walter A. Reichart and Lillian Schlissel, eds. (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 65.
6. Looking back at the American Revolution, Bancroft saw the United States' emancipation from history and its steady advancement of the principle of freedom, with each historical event a "step in the ladder" toward human perfection. Bancroft, *The History of the United States: From the Discovery of the American Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1864–75): 10. See also David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1789); Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805); Abiel Holmes, *Annals of America* (Cambridge: Hilliard and Brown, 1820); Jedidiah Morse, *Annals of the American Revolution* (Hartford, 1824); Timothy Pitkin, *Political and Civil History of the United States* (New Haven: H. Howe and Durrie&Peck, 1828).
7. Philip Gould, for instance, contends that early U.S. literature and culture is characterized by "the synchronicity of cyclical and progressive time," demonstrating this tension in several works of history and the historical romance, including Mercy Otis Warren's *History* and Catharine Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*. Philip Gould, *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 57.
8. Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3. See also Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2007); Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time: Literature and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). This scholarship revises the preponderant thesis about modern nationhood's coalescence through the standardized time of clocks, calendars, and commerce, a thesis most famously expressed in Benedict Anderson's argument of an imagined community moving together through the "homogenous empty time" of print and market capitalism. Pratt's work has been especially instructive to my understanding of how literature not only offers important access to heterogeneous and conflicting temporalities but also "superadd[s] certain specifically literary temporalities to those already circulating in the extraliterary settings of nineteenth-century America" (3). This assessment calls for the investigation of formal features such as genre—for this essay, the miscellany, the sketch, and the historical romance.
9. I remain in agreement with Susan Gillman's assessment that U.S. empire studies needs a "robust, systematic comparativism . . . attuned theoretically both to questions of time and space in its construction of analytical units." Susan Gillman, "The New, Newest Thing: Have American Studies Gone Imperial?," *American Literary History* 17.1 (Spring 2005): 209.
10. Jack P. Greene, "Colonial History and National History: Reflections on a Continuing Problem," *William and Mary Quarterly* 64.2 (April 2007): 235–50. Greene claims that despite national historians' increased awareness of the larger global and imperial contexts of U.S. development, national historiography habitually reverts to nation-centered explanations of the relationship between colonial and national history, viewing the colonial histories of America as "subordinate to national histories" and "useful principally for the light they shed on emergent national institutions and cultures" (235).

11. See Sandra M. Gustafson, "Histories of Democracy and Empire," *American Quarterly* 59.1 (March 2007): 107–33. Gustafson argues that the disintegration of the Puritan origins thesis, among other nation-centered historical paradigms, has created a "disciplinary schism" in American studies between early Americanists who focus on the colonial and early republican eras (before 1835) and U.S.-Americanists who focus on the national period (after 1835). "Separated principally . . . by distinct concepts of history," Gustafson argues, "scholars of the colonial period and the early republic are moving quickly to develop new histories that are less bound to the nation as a framework of knowledge production . . . these histories have much to offer scholars working in later periods" (107, 108).
12. A number of important studies have influenced my thinking about the relationship between the colonial and early national eras of American history, especially in their efforts to construct, to borrow Andy Doolen's phrasing, "a critical historical project that identifies the continuity of imperial power from British North America to the formation of the United States" and to trace the persistence of colonial forms and affects in the early United States. See Andy Doolen, *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv; Ed White, *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2005); David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003), 34; Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1998); Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007); Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English: American Literature and the British Diaspora, 1750–1850* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007); Paul Downes, *Democracy, Revolution, and Monarchism in Early American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002).
13. Greene, 240.
14. Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall* (1822; reprint, New York: The Library of America, 1991), 7.
15. For a discussion of the reception of *The Sketchbook*, see Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, *Adrift in the Old World: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago P, 1988), 32–41. See also Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving, Vol. 1* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), 168–191.
16. Even though his travel book received resounding praise, Irving drew criticism for imitating British literary models and cultural subjects. Among his most vocal critics, U.S. nationalists condemned what they viewed as Irving's Anglophilia and conformity to English tradition. See, for example, Edward Everett, "Review of Bracebridge Hall," *North American Review*, 15.36 (July 1822): 209.
17. For an extensive discussion on nineteenth-century Americans' sense of "cultural lateness" see Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986). See also Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973).
18. Charles Brockden Brown, "Preface," *American Review and Literary Journal* 1 (1802): 1.
19. While mid-century travel accounts such as Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) and Charles Dickens' *American Notes* (1842) are still among the most well known in the

- genre, British and other foreign travelers published hundreds of these accounts throughout the nineteenth century. See *American Notes, Travels in America: 1750–1920* in the Library of Congress's American Memory Online Collection, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/lhtnhtml/lhtnhome.html> (accessed March 18, 2013).
20. For instance, in 1834, fifty years following the Revolutionary War, British colonial theorist Edward Gibbon Wakefield declared "the United States are still colonies." *England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), 109.
 21. See George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987.), 73–98.
 22. James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), 107.
 23. Chandler, 118. Composed during Irving's seventeen-year sojourn in Europe (1815–1832), *The Sketchbook* was strongly influenced by European aesthetic, intellectual, and historical thought, including Scottish-Enlightenment aesthetics and history. Exemplified by Walter Scott's historical romances and William Robertson's *History of America* (which went through approximately twenty editions between 1777–1817), Scottish-Enlightenment Romantic historicism privileged measurement and comparison among nations. Although Irving's relationship with Scott is well documented, the influence of Scottish-Enlightenment discourse on *The Sketchbook* has received little attention. For a recent account of Scott and Irving's acquaintance, see Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).
 24. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "The Uses of History," *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2002), 160–61.
 25. Reflecting on Irving's diplomacy in a eulogy, Bryant proclaims: "I rejoice, for my part, that we have had such a writer as Washington Irving to bridge over the chasm between the two great nations—that an illustrious American lived so long in England, and was so much beloved there, and sought so earnestly to bring the people of the two countries to a better understanding with each other . . . A different work was assigned him in the very structure of his mind and the endowments of his heart—a work for peace and brotherhood . . ." William Cullen Bryant, "Commemoration of the Birth and Death of the Great Historian: Eulogy Delivered Before the New-York Historical Society," *New York Times*, April 4, 1860. Incidentally, Irving performed the role of ambassador in an official capacity as Minister to Spain, 1842–1846.
 26. See Dekker, 48. See also David Damrosch, "Goethe Coins a Phrase," in *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2003). Heralding the arrival of a new literary age, Goethe, who is widely credited with formulating the concept of *Weltliteratur*, believed it "would lead to greater toleration, respect, and caring in the interchange among people with divergent perspectives." John Pizer, *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 2006), 175.
 27. Rey Chow, "The Old/New Question of Comparison in Literary Studies: A Post-European Perspective," in *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2006).

28. Foucault defines "common ground" as the conventional "site," or stable basis, on which similarity and difference are ascertained. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1994), xvi.
29. Chow, 81.
30. Chow, 75.
31. Numerous historians have discussed Americans' strong and lingering sense of identity as members of the British Empire. See David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000) and Jack P. Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 208–30.
32. *TSB*, 80.
33. To be clear, although Irving shared the ethos of the world literature movement, he did not presume commonalities between British and American culture based on their purported historical continuity.
34. In the opening pages of *The Sketchbook*, Geoffrey Crayon describes the motivation for his transatlantic journey as one of comparison between the U.S. and Europe, particularly England. *TSB*, 14.
35. For a notable exception, see Rubin-Dorsky. See also Laura J. Murray, "The Aesthetic of Dispossession: Washington Irving and Ideologies of (De)Colonization in the Early Republic," *American Literary History* 8.2 (summer 1996): 205–31; Richard V. McLamore, "The Dutchman in the Attic: Claiming an Inheritance in *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*," *American Literature* 72.1 (March 2000): 31–57.
36. *TSB*, 80.
37. Michael T. Gilmore, "Washington Irving," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 1: 1590–1820*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 669.
38. Here, Crayon's enchantment closely resembles an affective experience described by the contemporary aesthetic theory of "associationism." This theory held that an individual could access history through the imagination, evoking historical associations from present scenes and objects. See Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1812). In some instances Irving represents enchantment as an aesthetic experience, in others, a supernatural occurrence.
39. *TSB*, 269.
40. *TSB*, 233–235.
41. Williams, 185.
42. Foucault describes enchantment as a feeling or effect resulting from unusual combinations: "We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other; the mere act of enumeration that heaps them all together has a power of enchantment all its own." *The Order of Things*, xvi.
43. Occasionally all of these subject positions come together in a single story line: for instance, the piece on English Christmas, narrated over five sketches. The "Christmas Dinner" sketch epitomizes

- this idea of peer-like exchange: Crayon and his British hosts gather around the banquet table in the spirit of "warm-hearted hospitality" to eat, drink, talk, tell stories, and play games. Yet Irving also takes several opportunities to interrupt this vision of aristocratic social order, indicating that these holiday traditions and the entire manor house system are in decline. *TSB*, 230.
44. Williams describes Irving as a talented sketch artist who self-consciously transfers his visual virtuosity to prose (45, 169–70).
 45. Amanpal Garcha, "Styles of Stillness and Motion: Market Culture and Narrative Form in *Sketches by Boz*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 30 (2001).
 46. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: Toronto Univ. Press, 1985); Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984).
 47. *TSB*, 169.
 48. *TSB*, 240.
 49. *TSB*, 247.
 50. Critics such as R.W.B. Lewis and Terrence Martin view the story as an allegory of the nation's development from "childhood" to "adulthood." "Rip, Ichabod, and the American Imagination," *Washington Irving: The Critical Reaction*, ed. James W. Tuttleton, (New York: ASM Press, 1993): 56–66.
 51. See Donald Pease, *Visionary Compacts: American Renaissance Writings in Cultural Context* (Madison: Wisconsin Univ. Press, 1987); Michael Warner, "Irving's Posterity," *ELH* 67.3 (Fall 2000): 773–799; Steven Blakemore, "Family Resemblances: The Texts and Contexts of 'Rip Van Winkle,'" *Early American Literature* 35.2 (2000): 187–212; Howard Horowitz, "'Rip Van Winkle' and Legendary National Memory," *Western Humanities Review* 58.2 (Fall 2004): 34–47; Lloyd Pratt, "Figures of Print, Orders of Time, and the Character of American Modernity," *Archives of American Time* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 24–62; Walter Göbel, "Washington Irving's 'Rip van Winkle', A Postcolonial Reading or: In Search of a Usable Past," in *Semiotic Encounters: Text, Image and Trans-Nation*, eds. Walter Göbel and Noha Hamdy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009): 103–118.
 52. Of course, this paranormal view of reality is very much in keeping with the genre of historical romance. I am also arguing that the principle of synchronicity—its acausal repetitions and resemblances—and the fantasy work of the romance, more generally, possess important explanatory power for nineteenth-century historical thinking. For a theorization of synchronicity, see C.G. Jung, *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, Roderick Main, ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1998).
 53. Judith Richardson observes that the history of the Hudson River Valley "has largely been one of unrest, colored by territorial conflicts, social diversity and dissensus, and multiple, contending colonizations." *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), 17.
 54. I borrow this phrase from Michael Warner, who suggests that histories departing from the national narrative are less likely to "assume that colonial history had an inner propulsion toward modern nationalism." "What's Colonial about Colonial America?" in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St. George, (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2000), 50.

55. In 1629, the Dutch West India Company began to grant enormous tracts of land to investors who brought fifty settlers to New Netherland. See S.G. Nissenson, *The Patroon's Domain* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973).
56. Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975); Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
57. *TSB*, 45.
58. Kammen, 23.
59. See Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978); Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: It's Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).
60. In her essay "Temporality and Postcolonial Critique," Keya Ganguly illuminates the danger of this accepted nineteenth-century historical method: "'Historicism' was complicit in reproducing past power structures and forms of thinking because it reduced historical time to an instrumental matter of moving through the continuum of history—from barbarism to civilization, from the primitive to the modern, from the bad old days to the good new ones. "Temporality and Postcolonial Critique," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 176.
61. Modern historians are not entirely free from false assumptions derived from linear sequentiality, including, in Jeremy Adelman's words, the common idea that "nations . . . stand as natural sequels to empire." Adelman cautions against the habit of supposing that the nation-state was the "automatic post-cursor to empire." Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *The American Historical Review* 113.2 (April 2008): 331, 320.
62. *TSB*, 49.
63. *TSB*, 47.
64. Jeffrey Insko, "Diedrich Knickerbocker, Regular Bred Historian," *Early American Literature* 43.3 (Fall 2008): 605–41.
65. *TSB*, 48.
66. The outline of my argument about "Rip Van Winkle" is similar to Lloyd Pratt's but our aims and conclusions are distinct. We both believe Irving contests the notion of rupture with the past and likewise demonstrate the coexistence of heterogeneous temporalities in the story. Pratt's interests lie in what "Rip Van Winkle" reveals about the character of American modernity, the disaggregating effects of the story's layering of traditional and modern times, whereas my reading centers on comparative historiography and the story's investigation of the relationship between the colonial past and the national present.
67. Numerous literary scholars and historians have recently emphasized that early U.S.-Americans understood the United States to be an aspiring empire. In the early nineteenth century, however, the term "empire" was primarily functional, referring to a polity that exercised sovereignty over a large territory previously composed of separate entities. As a synonym for "state," claims Richard Immerman, it was a value-free term. "Empire" began to gain pejorative connotations as opponents

- attributed the practice of colonialism and the denial of self-rule to this type of state that sought to increase in size, strength, and prosperity. See Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2010); Edward Larkin, "Nation and Empire in the Early U.S.," *American Literary History* 22.3 (Fall 2010): 501–26.
68. Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1982); Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).
69. TSB, 272, 286. Both sketches originally appeared in *Analectic Magazine* in 1814.
70. TSB, 282.
71. John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (1819; reprint, Salem, NH: Ayer, 1991), 74.
72. *Algonquian Spirit: Contemporary Translations of the Algonquian Literatures of North America*, Brian Swann, ed. (Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2005), 61.
73. Washington Irving, *A History of New York* (1809; reprint, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1873), 108. Irving's source was the journal of Robert Juet, a ship's officer on the 1609 voyage of the *Half Moon*. See Robert Juet, *Juet's Journal: The Voyage of the Half Moon from 4 April to 7 November 1609*, Robert M. Lunny, ed. (Newark: The New Jersey Historical Society, 1959), 32–33. For centuries, the drink-induced sleeping incident has been central to the Delaware account of Dutch arrival. See Evan T. Pritchard, *Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 2002), 134–140.

